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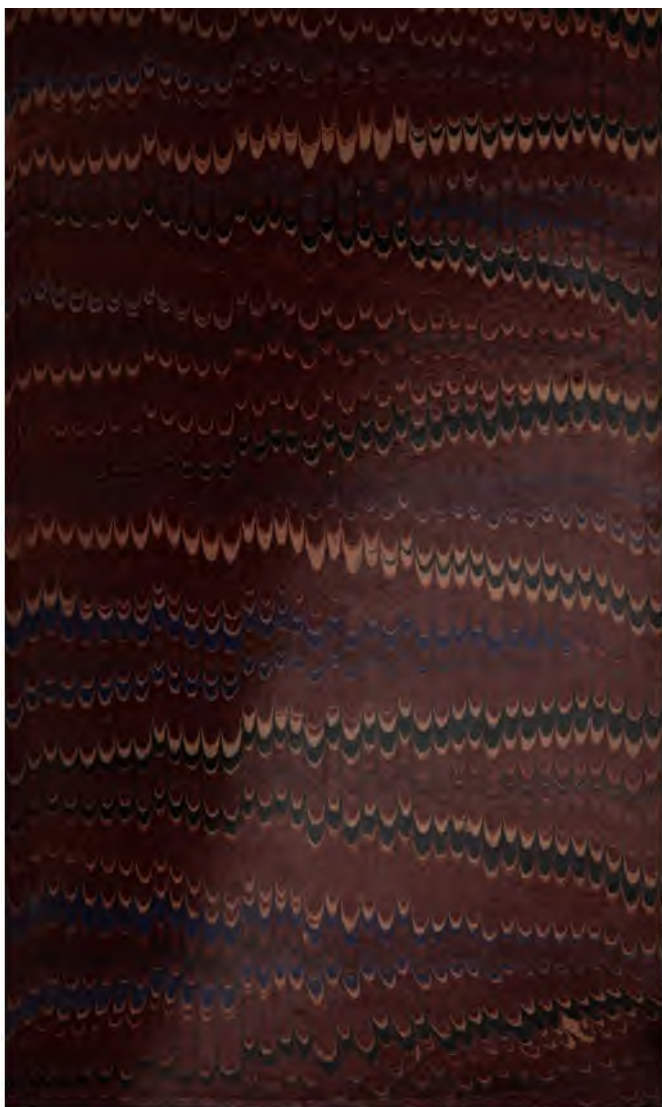
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DR. RONDEAU'S
REVENGE,

AND OTHER

LANCASHIRE SKETCHES.

BY WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

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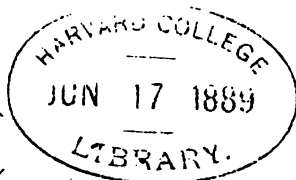
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Mary Good Fund.

**In another place the present writer has said—
“The genuine Lancashire lad is a being worthy
of study; his deep sense of humour, his patient
endurance of adversity, his life-long struggle with
want, his indomitable perseverance, his love of
home—all point him out as one of a remarkable
race; and despite his sometimes rough exterior,
and uncouth speech, your real Lancashire lad is
one of nature’s gentlemen at heart.”**

**These pages are an attempt to delineate some
of those qualities. Of the amount of success
which has attended the effort the reader must
judge for himself.**

WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

Strangeways.

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DR. RONDEAU'S REVENGE.

"Yo'n happen yerd tell o'th famous Dr. Rondeau?" said Jone o' Jack's, appealing to me. After a moment's consideration I was forced to confess that I was entirely destitute of any knowledge of that celebrated individual.

"Eh, weel, aw thought 'at everybody had yerd ov his doings; bur aw forget at yo're noane browt up i' this part. That wur a rare trick at Bant Tommy played on him, wur na it, Sam?"

Sam was sitting at the other side of the room, contemplating the curling of the smoke as it issued from his yard of clay. Without removing his pipe, he replied,

"It wur so; tell him that tale, owd lad, for ther's ne'er a one can tell it better nor thee."

Sam looked round after this (for him) long speech, and a murmur of assent broke from the company.

Jone knocked the ashes out of his pipe, re-charged and lighted it, then turning to Sam, he enquired:—

"Heaw lung is it sin, Sam? Yo're Sal wur coartin' Skylark Jimmy same time, hoo wur."

Sam, who did not relish this method of ascertaining dates, made no reply, beyond a gruff

"Dunno."

"Well," said Jone, "theyn been wed aboon twenty years, to my knowledge. Heawever, it's somewheer abeawt a score o' years sin, when one neet there a lot uv us having a bit uv a spree i'th best room o'th

'Fatted Calf,' and we're o' as snug as bugs in a rug, an' as merry as cleawns at fair time. It wur gett'n late, too, nee' midneet, when we yerd a horn blowin' i'th street eawtside, un makkin din enoof to wakken th' seven sleepers theirsels, if they'd happened to ha' bin takkin' a nap i' that quarter o'th globe. Well, thoose as know'd what it wur laughed, bur Bant Tommy, a Owdham roofyed, at wur on'y just sattlet here, sez—

"What ta firrips is yon eldritch skroikin'?"

"Whoy," sez Jone o'th lone eend, "wheer wur yo breawt up un edicated? Aw theawt every foo i'th shire had yerd' tell o' Dr. Rondeau's marlocks."

"Who i'th dule's name is Dr. Rondeau?" says t'other, "dost ta think lad were'n o' loike thee, awlus soakin i' bar parlours, and pyking up o'th odds un eends o' toidings at th' news felly has na grabbed howd on o' ready."

"Fair un sauftly," sez Jone, for he could tell at Bant wur a bit nettled, "we'en noan quarrel abeawt it."

"Tell us who this horn blowin' toike is," sez Bant, "'un then we shanno."

"Nay, aw know nowt abeawt him," sez Jone, "nobbut at he's a doctor, un plays th' maddest antics ever aw yerd on i' o' my born days. When he's in his trap he drives as if th' owd lad wur afther him; they'n had him up twice or throice o' ready on that account; then, noan so lung sin he hired a coach—"

"Hadna' he a trap uv his own?" axes Bant Tommy, as sharp as a needle.

"Eigh lad"

"What did he hire a coach for then?"

"Nay, if tha'rt particularly anxious to know, *theaw'd better go an' ax him.* Hark! theaw con tell

wheer abeawts he is by th' seawnd uv his horn. Heawever, whoy he should leave his gig a whoam, an' ger into a coach, I dunno know, bur aw know at he did, an' he druv off to Lancashire Jack feyther. Isna' that so, Jack?"

"Yo're reet," says Jack, "un no mistake; wi mun mind un be careful not to tell ony lees whoile there's sitch rare sherp feawk abeawt;" un he looked at Bant, as mitch as to say, "aw dunno meon thee, owd lad, oh no."

"Well, aw tell yo, he goes to Jack feyther, an axes wheer he geet his butcher's mayte, un heaw mitch a peawnd he gan for it, an' whether he had it on a year's contract or no. Well, afther he'd bin theer, he goes to lawyer Cannon's, an' goes o'er th' same nominy again; from theer he went to another pleck, upo' th' same errand, an' then marches off to th' butcher's shop, an', afther a very careful inspection of his stock, an' tellin' him 'at he'd bin recommended theer by such an such' feawk, he orders him to send over to his house, at eight o'clock, without fail"—

"Hawve a sheep?" sez Bant.

"Hawve a peawnd o' mutton chop," says lung Jone.

"Well, ther wur a rare laugh, bur Bant seem't somehow rayther nettled, un sez wi' a laugh—

"Will yo' help me, lads, to put a bit of a joke on this comical doctor o' yo'rs? Aw'll be bound he's nobbut a foo, for o' yo're foine tales abeawt him."

"Thee mind," says Lancashire Jack, "at he doesna' sarve thee loike eawr Joe un his chums."

"Heaw wur that?"

"Whoi, they sent a message one neet at he wur to go un see a lady at had gett'n th' faver, reet at th'

teawn eend, un when, he geet theer ther wur nowt bur a empty heawse at had bin to let aboon a year. Well, he could nayther feel it pulse, nor give it physic, so he e'en went whoam agen same as he come, bur he geet wynt who it wur at had played th' trick on him—ther wur hawve a dozen in it—un he went reawnd to o' their places one morning, an', without either by yo're leov, or iv yo' pleas', he knocked 'em deawn and walked off."

Bant felt rayther quare an' uncomfortable when he yerd this, bur it wouldna do to shew th' white feather; un so he says—

"Well, aw'm willing to stond mi' chance, an' we'n see what soart o' mettle yo're doctor's made on."

We tow'd th' landlord what we wur afther, an' as we'r rare good customers uv his, he made no bones at lett'n us have a bed-room for carryin' eawt th' marlock.

Bant doffed off his coat an' senglet, pood off his boots an' jumped into bed; Dick o' Abs cut off to ferret th' doctor eawt, an' th' rest on us stood and sat abeawt th' room, an' leawked as anxious as ever we could at so short a notice. Bant had herdly gett'n fairly sattled deawn, when owd Rondeau marches in, an' as cloose to him as his shadow aw'most coom his mon, Tiger. It wur a hot summer day, so th' doctor had wrapped him up in abeawt twenty overcoats, wrap-rascals, an' what nots, to keep th' heat eawt, as he sed.

"Well, my good man," sez the doctor, "what is the matter with you."

"Aw dunno," answers Bant, "aw sent for yo' o' purpose to find it eawt; aw're havin' a bit uv a spree with these fellies, un aw're tak'n so badly they'n had to *bring me up here*.—O-o-o-o-oh!"

"Let me feel your pulse."

Tommie gan him his nieve, an' sed, "aw feol as hot as ever aw con be, doctor, and for aw that aw fair whackerin'."

Iv onybody had sed he wur whackerin' at thowt o' bein' sarved loike Lancashire Jack brother, aw should na' ha' thowt it a bad guess.

Rondeau looked at his tung next, and then turnin' to Lancashire Jack he sed:—

"Your friend's in a bad way, Jack; fever very bad; wouldn't have given a straw for his life if you had sent for me an hour later."

Jack did'n know what to onsur to that, bur thowt he could'n do ony harm by sayin'—

"Hum!"

"Hum! young man; what do you mean by hum? dont you know that when the devil had got a mill master under each arm, and another in his mouth, some one asked him did he want any more, and *he* answered 'hum.'"

Jack didna loike that, for his feyther'd a mill at th' teawn eend. Then turnin' reawnd to th' sick mon th' doctor sez:—

"I'll attend to you in half a minute;" an' sure enough th' hawf minute wur hardly gone afore he coom back wi' a bucket in his honds. Seawse it went o'er th' bed, un poor Bant, who leawked loike a dreawnd rat, sat up an' glared at th' doctor as if he're gooin' to ate him. As for long Jone, un th' rest uv us fellies, we did neawt bur grin.

"Tiger," sez Rondeau, "you must not allow this man to get out of bed, on any account, before I come back, his life depends upon it," un wi' that he trotted off as though th' bailies wur afther him. Bant *begun to think* 'at th' joke wur none so amusin' as it

should be, and wanted to ger up, but Tiger put his arms gently reawnd him, un he met as weel a tried to ger eawt o'th New Bailey by whistlin' Jone o' Grinfilt. In about five minutes th' doctor coom back wi' a physie bottle in his hond. Iv yo'd a seen poor Bant's face then! Eh, awse ne'er forget it.

"You must take this at once," sez Rondeau, "it will cure you directly." Tommie made some rare faces at it, bur poor felley, it had to goo-deawn.

"How do you feel now?" says the doctor, afther a bit.

"Oh, well, aw feel aw reet now, thank yo, doctor."

"Well, I think you'll do no harm now. Take the remainder of the medicine, and then you may venture to get up."

Well, yo should have yerd how lung Jone cracked eawt o' laughin' at this, un heaw we o' jined in chorus. Bant looked as sheepish as could be whoile he swoiped off th' physie bottoms. Heawever, thowt he, aw'll tell th' owd lad 'at he's wasted his stuff for onc't, un by way o' beginnin' well he started o' laughin' loike mad. Bur, bi'th' mass, he soon changed his tune, and laughed t'other soide ov his meawth, when th' doctor sez, in his sharp rough way—

"Short reckonings make long friends, my man," un gan him a bill. To professional attendance, advice, and medicine, three guineas.

An that wur what he had to pay for bein' made th' laugh o' aw th' place.

DINGLE COT.

Yo'n never seen eawr heawse mayhap ?

They cau'n it Dingle Cot ;

A pictur' felley said it wur

A very pratty spot.

He talked abeawt its " breadth o' tone,"

An' such outlandish stuff ;

Heawever when yo like to come,

It's cloose by Monsal Clough.

I' th' portch the honeysuckles make

A pratty little bower ;

Aw've sat an smoked my pipe in it,

For mony a summer heawer.

Eawr Alice train't em t' grow, poor lass !

Hoo browt eawr feawk to shaume,

An' so we seldom mention hur,

Bu' keep her name i' th' laum.

Bu' when my mother thinks uv her,

Th' tears stond in her e'e ;

Hoo'll say " God guard my sinfu' lamb,

Wheerever hoo may be."

It's rarely though, her name hoo sez,

Except i' th' heaven's own ears ;

Bu' th' parable o' th' prodigal

Is blotted wi her tears.

Eawr Liz bin married mony a year ;
 Hoo married Bowton Joe ;
 A happier pair yo' winna foind,
 Wheerever yo' may go.

Eawr Joe has ta'en to selling books ;
 His woife's a pratty lass ;
 They sen he's gotten weel to do,
 Wi' quoite a store o' brass.

Eawr Seyroh married a wary scomp,
 A drunken foo' at th' best ;
 Hoo's buried neaw i' Ash'n Church,
 Wi' a babby on her breast.

Eawr John has gone to 'Merriky ;
 It mays us feel some queer,
 To think heaw we are left behint ;
 He's i'th Congress over theer.

Eawr Jim he is a quioiet un,—
 He's single an' a tailor ;
 Bu' Willie wur a gallows cowl,
 An' went off for a sailor.

My stars ther wur a ruck uv us,
 Fro' Willie up to John ;
 Heaw chaunged things are, good lorjus me !
 We welly aw are gone.

Aw'm sure th' owd heawse had use' to be
 As thrung as it 'ud crom ;
 An' neaw—ther's ony Jim an' me,
 Wi' mother left a' whoam.

GALLOWSFIELD GHOST.

"Tell us abeawt th' Gallowsfeld boggart," said Jone, turning to a sharp-looking little old fellow, with a jolly face and a waistcoat of red plush; his coat was an old-fashioned, blue one, with brass buttons; mole-skin knee breeches, brown stockings, and shoes with bright buckles, completed a now-a-days remarkable costume. The old man, who, I found, was known to his neighbourhood as "Traddle Sammy," without any further solicitation, started off thus:—

"One neet aw wur gooin' to see aunt Margit on a bit o' proivate business o' mi own, at's got nowt to do wi mi tale whatsomever. Heaenever, aw'm an owd chap neaw, an' aw've welly gotten o'er o' that sort o' thing, so aw dunno think ut aw need be vary shawm-faced ut lettin' yo' know o' th' proivate an' partickler arrant aw wur beawnd on wur to see mi cousin Nan, an aw've had no 'casion t' repent o' mi visits yet, fur hoo's bin a rare good woife to me, so hoo has—"

"Only theaw'd leifer hoo hadna' quoite so mitch gab, eh, Sam?"

"Well, it saves th' expense o' keepin' a brid—ther is that comfort abeawt it; bur yo're runnin' me off mi story completely. Aw'm shure aw've cleon furgett'n wheer aw'd gett'n to.—Oh, well, as aw wur sayin', aw wur gooin' to see eawr Nan, when, as aw turnt into *Dead-mon's-lane*, who should aw see comin

to'ards me bur Dick Dirreckly an' owd Cromptets. 'Helloo! wheer ta gooin' lad,' sez Cromptets; 'come along wi' me an' Dick; we're beawnd fur th' Angel on Horseback? Aw've bin speckilatin' a bit, and made some brass, so aw con afford to stand treat o'th' neet, if yo'll on'y come.'

"Well, aw've yerd tell o'th' kingdom o' Cockaigne, wheer roast pigs run abeawt ready stufft, wi' knives an' forks stickin' eawt ov 'um, an' sheawting loike mad, 'Eat me iv yo' please.'"

"Aw wish they'd bring that breed o'er here i' Lankishire," said a quiet looking individual, who was partially invisible on account of the tobacco-smoke he was puffing from his mouth.

"So do aw. Bur dunno intherrupt me, or else awse get moithert, an' mak' a bigger foo' o' misel than mi feyther an' mother made on me. Well, aw've never bin to Cockneydom, and so aw dunno whether what they sen's true or false abeawt it; bur aw thout at a good offer loike Cromptet's didna come every day i'th' week, an' aw wished then at aw'd gone to see Nan ony other neet i'stead o' that. Dick thrutched his arm under moine an' wur fur bearin' me off *nobus vobus*,* bur aw sez,

'How'd thi hurry, Dick; aw conna go wi' yo' two, fur aw've got to goo an' see mi aunt.'

"Come alung wi' thi direckly, an' dunna be soft; thi aunt 'll noan commit shuicide iv tha' doesna' goo. Hoo's noan so fain on thi' as o' that; for it's only tuther neet hoo sed hoo couldna' gawm what theaw coom potterin theer for o'together."

"Well, bur aw mun goo," aw sez, fur aw didn't loike to disappoint Nan.

* *Nolens volens*.

"Well, iv tha mun goo, whoy tha mun, aw reckon; bur heaw lung wilt be?"

"Awst be back in abeawt an heawr, or maybe two."

"Why, mon, tha does'n meon t' say ut theaw're gooin' t' cross Gallows-field i'th' dark?"

"Eigh bur aw do," aw sez. "Why should'nt aw? It's a public road i'th' dark as weel as i'th' leet, is'nt it?"

"Well, tha con please thisel, uv course; bur it's what aw would'n do. Whoy, owd Snap Dick's boggart's haunted this croft th' Lord knows heaw lung. Heawever, goo thi ways, lad, aw dunno' want feor thee; bur if theaw does get torn Lymm fro' Wharburton, whoy it winno surprise me; bur goo thi ways, an' iv theaw sees an owd 'oss-shoe pur it i' thi pocket, an' be sure an' say thi Catechis as theaw crosses th' croft, or else theaw'll get a feorin' some o' these neets, theaw will, lad, as shure's thi name's Traddle Sammy."

"Aw promised 'em at awd' join 'em as soon as aw could at th' Angel on Horseback, an' scutturt off eendway to my aunt's, fur aw had t' mak' up th' toime aw'd lost wi' these fellies. When aw geet theer aw geet mi proivate an' partickler business dun, bur' th' details on it, loike what's in a lost pocket book, ud ha' no vally fur onybody but th' owner. Bi th' toime we'd finished eawr talk, it had gett'n quite dark, an' as aw throttled off deawn t' lone aw felt rayther queerish, an' should ha' bin glad to have had a bit more leet on th' subject; bur aw wur forced to try an' mak' th' best ov it, an' so aw traddled off to'ards th' Angel on Horseback, an' as aw're goin' alung wi' mi een on th' greawnd (fur th' road wur nooan th' best), aw yerd one o'th' strangest seawnds, to mi thinkin', as ever coom eawt ov a windpipe.

wick or deead. It wur nayther spaykin', nor sheawtin', nor skroikin', nor squallin'; bur a mixture uv o'th' batch. Aw wur some flayed aw con tell yo', mi yure stuck streight up loike a yard o' pump-wayter turned upsoide deawn, aw could feel mi heart thumpin' agen mi ribs, an' aw're wackerin' loike an aspen leof fro' top to toe, for when aw yerd this awful din, aw lifted mi een up, an' by heavens! reet under th' gallows tree, wheer Snap Dick wur hung for killin' his woife, ther stood a boggart o' i' whoite wi' outstretched arms as tho' he wur gooin' to clutch an' bear me away for ever fro' th' pleasant earth an' th' friends aw loved so weel. They sen at when a fellow's drownin' every action uv his loife comes afore his een, an' aw can believe it, for whoile aw're glarin' at th' boggart aw thowt o' th' owd woman an' whatever would hoo do when aw're gone, an' then aw thowt o' Nan, an' then what a pity it wor at aw had'na stopt wi Cromptets and Dick Dirreckly, for aw made shure at aw'd drunk mi last o' Creawdie's whoam-brewed, aw thowt—bur lorjus me! aw could'na tell yo' in a week what rushed thro' mi moind i' less than a minit, for ther coom agen that din, hoarse, rough, an' wi' no meonin' in it at aw could gawm, an' aw thowt shure enough it wur a devil damned coom post haste from down below to fot mi wicked soul. 'Oh! Lord!' aw sez, 'whatever have aw done to be boggart-hunted so?' an' aw started off wi' might an' main for Creawdie's. A fellow 'll run rare an' weel if he's runnin' for loife, bur what'll he do when he thinks at booath deoth an' hell are at his heels aw leov yo' to guess. Aw hardly think at Flying Childers hissels 'ud a gotten to th' Angel on Horseback sharper nor aw did that neet. Aw beawnst in, an' dropt into a cheer, an' if yo'll beleove me aw could'nt ha' said so mitch as 'bo' to a goose—neaw, not if yo'd

ha' creawnd mi king o' Englandshire. They aw coom flutterin' reawnd mi i' no toime.

"What the firrips is up wi' th' lad?" sez owd Crompets, "he's as whoite as tho' he'd seen a witch or a boggart!"

"An' so aw have," aw sez, "an' so may yo' too, if yo'll be sharp." At that they did nowt bur laugh, an' aw felt so nettled aw could ha' knock't 'em o' deawn loike so monny ninepins, aw could.

"Aw'll goo direkly," sez Dick, "iv onybody else will."

"An' so will I," sez Crompet; "aw've wanted to see a boggart a lung time, aw'll see what sort o' feelings they'n got."

"Aw said he met try th' boggart's feelings as mich as ever he loikt, bur aw'd had enough on it, an' wanted to get eawt o'th' job o' together, for aw loikt th' ideas o' huntin' th' ghost as little as aw loikt th' ghost huntin' me. Bur they would'na' let me off a that'ns, at ony proice, an' so we o' started off, bur aw took good care to keep to th' eend o' th' lot, tho' aw'd no occasion to be feort this toime, fur ther wur at leost a 'baker's dozen' uv us, an' wur arm't i' th' queerest fashion at these parts had seen sin' th' days of Ludd and th' Blanketeers. Owd Crompets had breawt Creawdie's poker eawt in his hond, an' Dick wur marchin' along as stately as yo' please wi't foire-tungs on his sheawther. Creawdie had gett'n his grondfeyther's walkin' stick, and t'others had o' gett'n summat i' thier neives, iv it wur nobbut a twothri' stoans. We geet o' safe to th' corner o' th' croft, an' then aw' looked for my ghostly marrow, an' *theer it wur sufe enough*, an' they o' on 'em seed it as soon as me. Owd Crompets coom floying t' th' front an' hit Creawdie atop o' th' yed wi' th' poker as he

passed. Creawdie pop't deawn as tho' he'd been shot, an' showted eawt (for he thowt it wur th' boggart ut had struck at him), ' Good lorjus me, do forgi' me this toime, aw've a woife an' eight childer, aw have fur sure, an' aw'll never laugh at boggarts agen as lung as ever aw live.' Creawdie's stick geet atwixt Dick's legs, an' aw fun' missel astroide o' th' foire-tung, an' a ugly brute it wur to roide, for it flung me fost go too. T'others o' coom tumblin' deawn atop uv us till yo'd a thowt it wur an earthquake in an owd rag shop. Whoile we wur o' flounderin' abeawt athat'ns up o'th' greawnd, aw geet a gradely glint at th' boggart, an' it wur just i' th' owd spot, wi' it's arms stretch't eawt same as ever; bur fancy my surprise when it bawled eawt,

" Iv one o' yo' fellows doesna' come an' loase mi, aw'll gi' yo' a reet good hoidin' when aw do get free. Aw con stond a joke ony time, bur this is too mich uv a good thing."

" Why," sez Creawdie, " who i' th' name o' heaven art ta?"

"Aw'm Jack o' th' Fowt; doesn't ta know me?"

"Then what art dooin' theer athat'ns? We thowt theaw wur a boggart, mon."

"Whoy," sez Jack, " aw took deawn mi wark after baggin, an' theawt aw'd bear whoam wi' it, an' stop at eawr Jim's to-neet, bur aw co'd in at th' Owd Cow, an' geet fairly ith' linderins o' mi wits; an' when aw geet this fur, aw wur that done up, at aw fair went to sleep reet under th' gallows tree, and some nowty pouse-durt at's seen me he's unwrapt mi wark an' fairly swaddlet me in it."

"An' reet weel th' chap had done his job, whoever he wur, for he'd twisted th' calico reawnd and reawnd owd Jack fro' top to toe, an' then lashed

him to th' gallows wi' cord, an' fix't his arm erect streight eawt i' th' air, wi' a slip knot thrown o'er th' cross beam. When aw'd passed him at th' fost he'd be just waknin' up, an' th' gruntin' an row at he made when he fun' hissel so uncomfortable (me bein' a bit feort at th' time) wur what had startled me so. Well, we unloast th' owd chap, an' when we went back to th' Angel on Horseback, ther wurns' a merrier fellow i' th' ruck than th' Gallowsfield Ghost."

COURTIN' TOIME.

Uv o' the toimes o'th' day an' neet,
 Ther's one at aw loike th' best,
 It comes wi' the deein' o' the leet,
 When th' sun has gone to rest.

An' when th' owd clock is up o'th' stroke,
 My heart is reer an' fain;
 Aw' dons mi swingur on, an' goes
 To meet my sweetheart Jane.

An' when to th' wooden bridge aw come,
 'Ats cloose by Langley-lea,
 Aw' starts o' whistlin' then loike mad,
 Till th' brid come's eawt to me,

An' by owd Pinder mill we goo,
 An' deawn by th' brook soide walk,
 An' pertin' toime hez olez come,
 Afore we'n done eawr talk.

Eh! th' flowers i' every lone hoo knows,
 Ther names by heart hoo's got;
 An' in my coat last neet hoo put
 A blue forget-me-not.

An' that by'th' mass aw never shall
 As lung as aw'm a sinner,
 An' iv hoo is bur to be won,
 By th' maskins then aw'll win her.

DUKINFIELD BELLES.

If a sweetheart you're wishful to gain,
As fair as the Lancashire dells,
Oh you'll have the least cause to complain,
If you try 'mong the Dukinfield Belles.

To harden your heart is in vain,
I am sure they must deal in love spells,
Your affections they're certain to gain,
The bonnie fair Dukinfield Belles.

My heart long in bondage has been,
In bondage, but never rebels,
My enslaver, oh, she is the queen
Of the bonnie fair Dukinfield Belles.



ABNER CLARKE'S CONVERT.

"Ther's mooar ways a killin' a dog nor chokin' it wi' furmetree," said Bill o' Bent, "an' up o'th' same principle, ther's mooar ways o' converting a fellow nor one. Yo' seen ther's so mitch difference i' their way o' takkin' this socart o' thing. Some loike it hot an' hot—want ta feeol t' flames an' smell t' brimstone, an' see th' Owd Lad waggin his tail for joy at thowt o' grabbin' 'em. Some are tother way incloined, an' want ta see t' praycher ta' a star eawt o'th' cleawds an' let 'em have a peep beyont. Some loike ta see a chap poo' off his coat an' singlet an' bang into his sarmon as if he wur a proize-feighter, an' some loike ta—"

He paused, rather out of breath, took a long draught of the contents of his pot, and, after giving a sigh of satisfaction, wiped his mouth, and resumed—

"Some loike ta goo ta sleep at th' collect, and wakken up when they're singin' th' Doxology. In fact, to mak' a lung tale short, ther's as monny ways o' gooin' ta Heaven as ta London. Yo' see some have godliness prayched into 'em, an' some have it beatten into 'em; bur aw knew a chap at wur fairly burnt into a daycent christian."

"Heaw wur that, Bill?" inquired my companion. "Aw should think 'at th' fellow 'at converted thy friend owt ta tak' a patent eawt; it 'ud save a vast o' money i' parson's wages."

"Well," answered Bill, nothing loth to spin a yarn, "aw'll tell yo' heaw it happened, tho'aw dunno think it 'ud onser i' every case. Where aw used ta live—an' it's not very far fro' here, an' lots on yo' 'll know th' chaps weel enough, though yo' may be ne'er yerd this tale abeawt 'em—ther wur a cantin' rascal ov a fellow 'at th' lads christened 'Harry-goo-Easy,' fur he wur one o'th comicalist walkers ever aw coom across, tho' he could'na help that, poor fellow, an' it wur a deawn-reet shawm for 'em to tease him abeawt it i'th way 'at they did. Yo' see his name wur Harry Bond, bur one uv his legs wur summat less nor a yard shorter than t'other, an this made him hobble abeawt i' a quare fashion, an' sorry aw've bin for him, too, monny a time when aw've seen him powerlin' along i' his up-an'-deawn way; bur fur aw that aw never loiked him, nor nooan o'th cantin' crew 'at he belonged to. Tawk abeawt parsons! Owd Harry could heawd forth abeawt th' second comin', an' Armygeddon, an' toipes, an' emblems, an' th' Lord knows wot besaide. He'd th' Bible fair at his finger-eends, an' o' th' use he could ma' on it wur ta beg th' gentlefolk's owd coats an' things, an' sponge on everybody at wer'nt sick an' toired o' his holy sheaw an' sanctimonious dodges. As fur wark, that wur a thing he had'n ony notion on at o'. Well, not fur fro wheer this chap's 'humble dwelling,' as he cawd it, stood, wur Abner Clarke's fields an' farm"—

"Aw knew Abner reet weel," put in Traddle Sammy. "He wur a Christian, an' no mistake, if yo' loike. Aw know he us't ta come ta eawer heawses when we wur eawt o' wark, money an' tick—ay! lung after th' parson had furgetten th' road. He wur a good owd chap, that he wur, wi' his—"Thee had better not say eawt abeawt this, friend," when he'd emptied

his basket and pockets. God bless him. Bur dunno' ler me stop thee, Bill, on'y when onybody tawks abeawt owd Abner, aw feeol ready to cry, mon, aw do."

"Abner Clarke," resumed Bill, "wur wot aw caw a gradely mon; and moind yo', ther' wur lots on him too, though he wurna' one o' thoose fat owd fellies 'at look as tho' they wur i' trainin' t' tak' a proize at an agricultural show. He'd a broad, honest-looking red face, beamin' wi' good natur' an' cuteness, an' th' very buttons on his big flapt waistcoat wur worth a walk t' look at. He wore knee-breeches an' a broad-brim'd hat, an' had a thick silver watch cheean danglin' eawt of his breeches fob, an' us't t' look, aw thowt, th' bonniest owd chap 'at iver aw clapt mi een on. Bur one fine mornin', when aw went in fur a bit o' chat, aw cud gawm quoit weel 'at he wur chawvin' abeawt summot. I'sted o' chattin' an' jokin' he sat i'th chimley nook as mute as a meawse, an' kept puffin' away at his poipe as tho' he wur fairly bothert, an' didna' know whot t' ma' on it at o'.

"Good mornin, Abner," aw sez.

"How dost theau do, friend John?" he onswer't.

"Pretty well, owd lad," aw sez, "tho' aw've quoit as mitch meawth as mayte; bur whot's up wi' thee this mornin'? Theaw looks loike a chap condemned ta deoth at hongin' toime, up to th' neck in it."

"Well, friend," sez Abner, "aw'm sorely exercised as to what I ought to do in a matter which concerns the good character of one of my neighbours. Thee knows that I have a hay-rick in Acker's fowt, and some one has been stayling hay from it neet after neet for mony a month. Aw're never within giving a poor neighbour as much hay as he wanted; but that any of them would rather have it without asking than with, grieves me."

"But whot are yo' going t' do?" aw sez. "Yo' dunno' meon ta stond wi' yo'r honds behoint yo'r back whoile th' peawse-durt picks yo'r pocket dun yo?"

"I scarcely know what to do, friend."

"Aw know whot aw'd do," aw sez, "aw'd ta' mi blackthorn an' watch fur t' waistrel, 'hooever it is; an' aw'll be beawn'd iv he oncest geet into mi claws, he'd be loike a cat wi' its tail in a meawse-trap—glad enough to get eawt."

So wi' that aw left th' owd chap to turn it over i' his quoite way; bur he wur regular potter't abeawt it, an' did'n know whot to mak' on it. When it geet dark, heawever (aw yer'd o' abeawt it afterwards), he took his walkin'-stick (an' that 'ud a bin no joke on onybody's pate, fur it wur a rare owd stick 'at had bin his grond-fayther's, an' had a knob on it soize ov a Kesmas pud-din') an' th' owd dark 'orn lanthern, an' pur on his great cooat, an' marched eawt, detarmin't to watch his rick that neet, an' see who it wur 'at had takk'n sitch a partickilar an' unwanted fancy to it o' late. He powler't off deawn th' lone, an then bi' th' footpath o'er Dyke's Croft. Theaw knew wheer owd Abner hay-rick wur, Jack?"

This question the old man addressed to Jack-o'-Jone's, who replied, "Oh, ay, aw know it weel enuff; it wur just bi' th' eend o' Gallowsfield, an' after yo'n cross'd th' Moss."

"So it wur," observed Sammy, and then, with the air of an original thinker, added, "an' a good owd chap it belunged to."

"Reet, lads. Well, owd Abner geet to th' rick an' keawered hissels deawn, determin'd to ma' th' best he cud ov a bad job; and sartinly he hadn' mitch to con sole him just then, fur th' moon wur i'th sulky quarter an' would na' condescend to gi' a solitary glint o' leet-

It wur owt bur a noice arrant a't he'd underta'en, fur it wur blowin' loike a cutlooker in a bad temper, an' th' rain begun to pelt deawn as iv it had on'y gotten that neet to come deawn in at o'; an' o'th queer eldritch noises 'at one yers i'th country late at neets kept dinggin into his ears, an' makkin' gooseflesh ov his limbs. I'neaw it begun to rain less, an' he yers a noise different to o' them 'at had gone afore it. A mon's foot comin' wi' a heavy hommerin' thud fust, an' then a leeter thud, an' then a heavier 'un ogen; owd Abner knew th' step weel enuff, an' knew ther' wur none bur Harry-goo-Easy's at o' loike it i' that part o'th globe, ot ony rate. It wur just at th' croft eend when he yerd it fust, an' it kept comin' on an' on, heavy thud, leet thud, dot-an'-carry-one, till it geet reet to th' hayrick, wheer he wur keawered deawn, an' then he had th' pleasur' o' seein' th' rapscallion helpin' hissel wi' no sparin' hond to whot wur i'th rick, gettin' his hay loike Paddy geet his black eye—fair for nowt. Well, it is no' one o'th noicest things i'th world even fur a Quaker to stond by an' see hissel robbed, an owd Abner wur as pussl't as ever to tell whot to do. True, he knew who th' rascal wur weel enuff neaw, an' it wur gallin' to think 'at this sanctimonious peawse-durt wur th' thief after o'. Whoile he wur thinkin' it o'er, an' troyin' to mak' his moind up, th' fellow had gotten a rare good burn on his back, and started off i'th ow'd up-an'-deawn fashion fur whoam, an' Abner very cautiously picked hissel up, an' begun to follow him. They get eawt o'th field, an' fairly into th' lone, when an odd soart of a marlock popped into owd Abner head, an' sloidin' t' shade off the lanthorn, he put th' flame to th' fellow's load ov hay, an' havin' fairly set it a leet, he dropp'd deawn into th' hedge-backin' to see what 'ud happen next. Dot-an'-carry-

one kept mearching on, an' th' owd felley could see sparks flying abeawt i' rare style; bur i' neaw th' whole consarn geet one sheet o' foire, an' th' fellow dropt his blazin' load, an' run as iv Owd Nick wur pelterin' helter-skelter after him. Abner chuckled rarely to see th' dirty rascal tumblin' fro' soide to soide in his hurry to get eawt o'th road; an' after puttin' eawt sitch o'th hay as wurna' frizzled to deoth, he went whoam an' had a good neet's sleep; an' thinkin' *his* rick ot ony rate wur safe, he didna' get up till late next mornin'; bur Mistress Clarke wur knocking abeawt quoite early, an' hoo'd hardly shown her face eawtside o'th kitchin dur when up comes Harry-go-Easy.

"How dost theaw do, friend Harry?" sez th' good woman.

(Hoo knew nowt abeawt th' blazin' hay yet, yo' may be sure.)

"Good morning, Mrs. Clarke," he sez. "Is—has Mr. Clarke—I mean is Abner about yet?"

"No, he isn't; but whatever's the matter with thee this morning? Has anything happened? Thee looks as if thee were going to be hanged."

"Matter! oh, no—yes—nothing is the matter with me—I mean I'm—I want to see Mr. Clarke as soon as ever he's stirring."

"Well, thee can wait if thee likes until he comes," hoo onswer'd, rayther sharply; fur hoo wur loike o'th rest o' women foak: hoo loiked to know th' in's an' eawts o' everythin', an' hoo wurna' o'er weel pleased at Harry not takkin' her into his confidence. Well, Harry mearched abeawt loike a hen upo' a hot backston'; he wur here an' theer an' everywhere. He cudna' settle deawn gradely fur longer nor three minits; an' accordin' to his calkilation owd Abner wur i' bed two

wick an' sixteen heawrs, the toime hung so heavy on his honds. At last, heawever, th' farmer puts in an appearance.

"Here's Harry, waitin' fur yo' upo' some mak' a bisness, an' very partickilar, too, seemingly," sez Mrs. Clarke.

"How dost thou do, friend Harry?" sez Abner. "If thee has anything to say to me, step this way;" an' wi' that he leods Harry off into th' sittin' reawm.

Harry stood theer looking as sheepish an' bothert as possible, then he burst eawt—

"Oh! Mr. Clarke, do forgive me, do forgive me."

"Friend Harry," sez Abner, looking at him sternly, "what is the meaning of this? There is only one can forgive thee for whatever thou mayst have done wrong, and to Him thou shouldst address thy prayers. Who am I to forgive?"

"Oh! Mestur Clarke, yo' dunno'—yo' dunno' know—on'y lemme tell yo', an' iv yo' will bur furgit me, aw'll do owt fur yo' 'at one chap can do fur another. Fur mony a month aw've gone neet afther neet to yo'r rick i'th croft, an' stole yo'r hay regilar, aw have; an' aw went last neet same as usual an' geet mi burn, bur as aw wur a comin' deawn th' lone, th' Lord sent his destroyin' foire fro' heaven, an' 'at aw wurna' kilt deod up o'th spot is a wonder an' a miracle; an' iv yo' will bur furgit mi, aw'll goo to th' meeting-heawse an' wear a broad-brimm'd hat as lung as ever aw live, aw will." An' afther that, lads, aw con tell yo' aw knew mony a worse Christian nor Abner Clarke's convert.

THE WEAVER'S SONG.

Eh ! o' at glitters is'na gowd,
 An' so aw'se ne'er repoine,
 Iv th' squire, at lives at Langley ho
 Hez picter's, lond, 'an' woine.

Though aw mun wark wi' meet and main,
 As lung as aw con stond,
 Aw'd herdly loike to chaunge wi' thoose
 'At lives o'th' fat o'th' lond.

Grief doesna' care for money bags,
 Bur visits hee' and low :
 An' th' heart ache's fond o' squoires an' lords,
 An' death comes to us o'.



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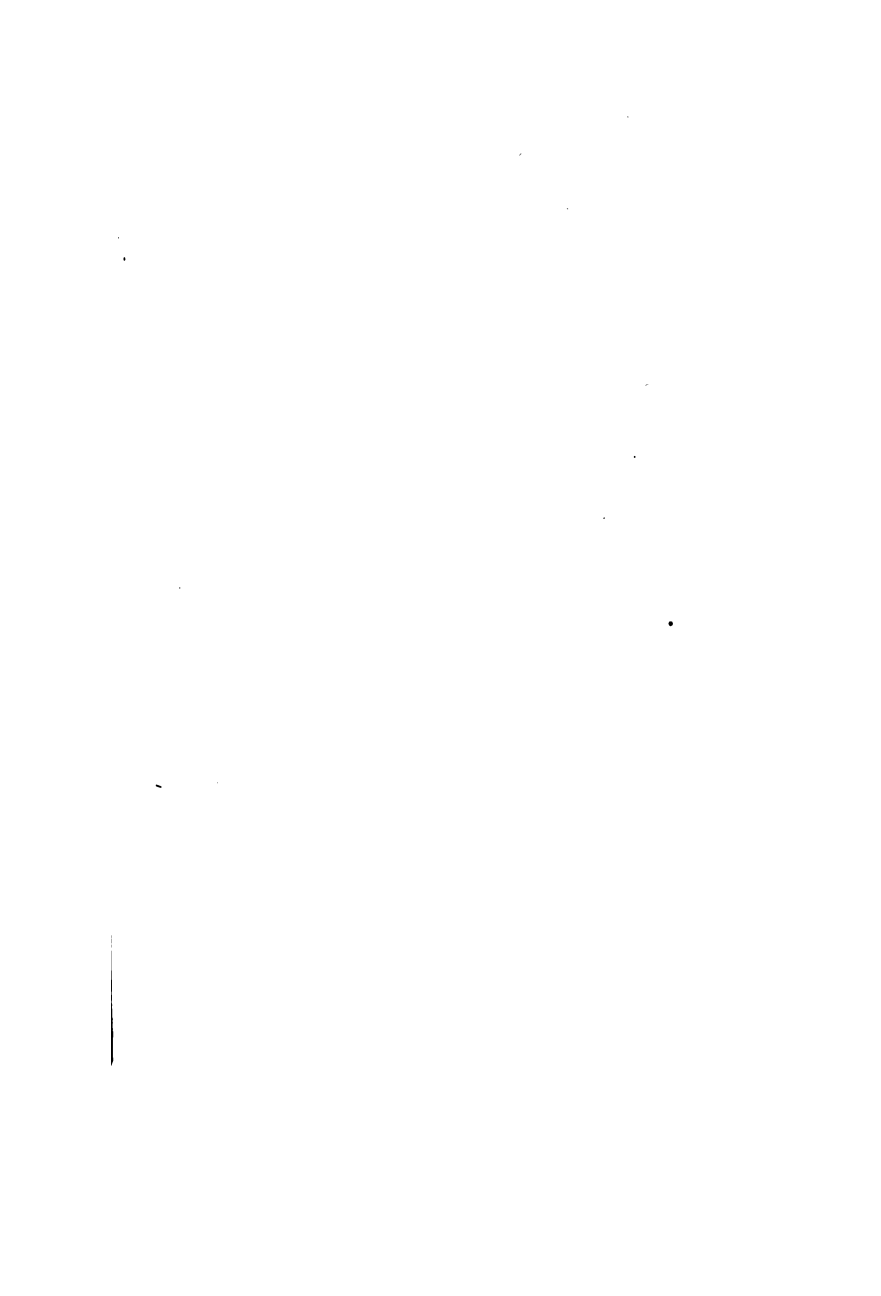
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